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Influence of Bible Associations:

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DISCOURSE

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THE BIBLE SOCIETY

OF

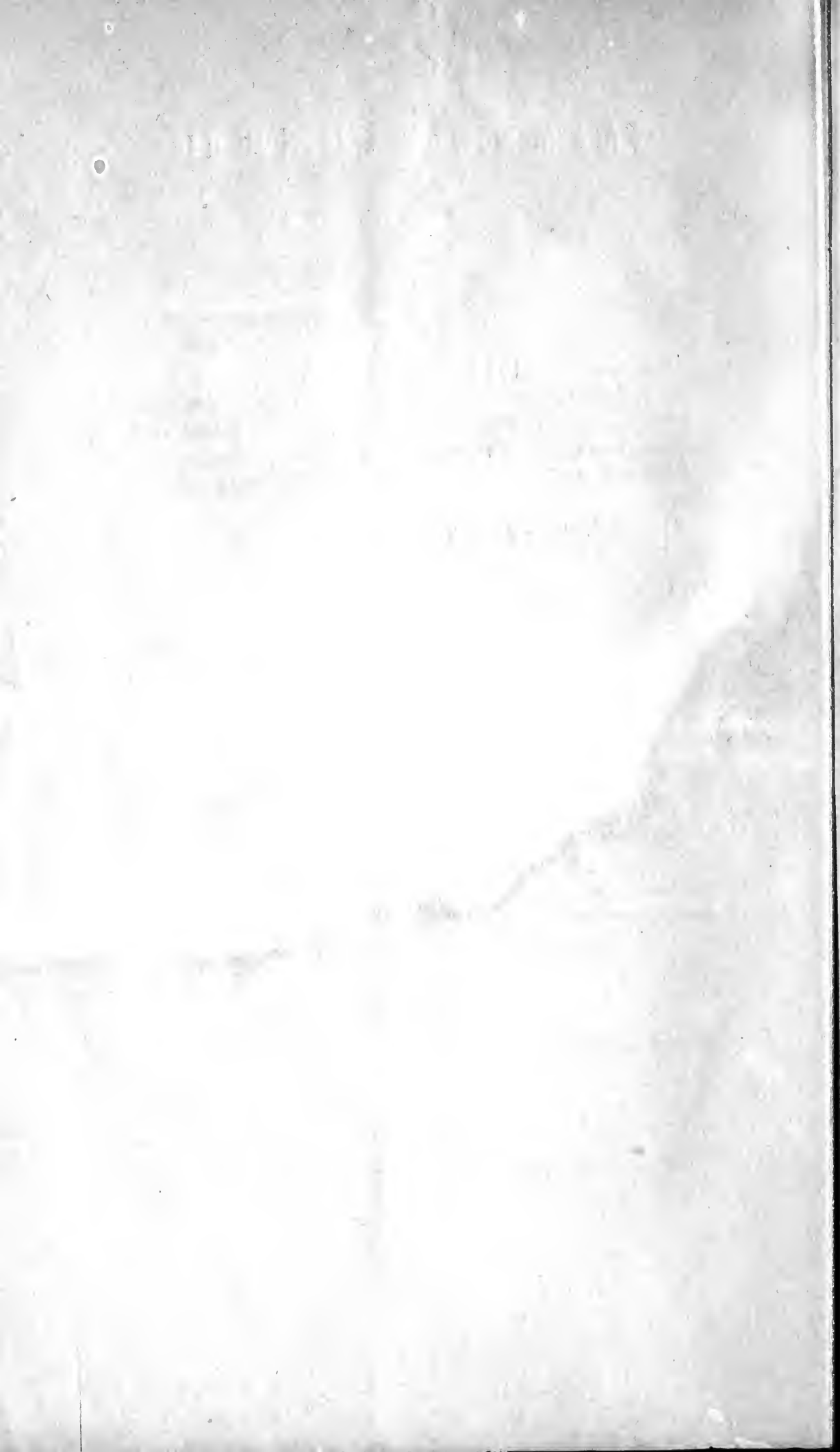
PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE AND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

GETTYSBURG, APRIL, 16TH, 1854.

BY REV. O. O. MC'CLEAN, A. M.
Of Middletown, Pa.

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*Pennsylvania College,
April 17th, 1854.*

MY DEAR SIR,

The Managers of our Bible Society are grateful to you for the services you kindly rendered them last evening, and have directed me to request a copy of your able and appropriate discourse for publication.

Allow me to add, that I shall be gratified if you will comply with their wishes.

With assurances of sincere regard,

I remain, Dear Sir,

Truly your friend,

M. L. STOEVEER,

President of the Society.

REV. O. O. M'CLEAN,

Gettysburg, April 18th, 1854.

MY DEAR SIR,

I sincerely tell you that my discourse was not prepared with a view to publication. With the hope, however, that some of its sentiments may do good, I hereby commit it to your disposal.

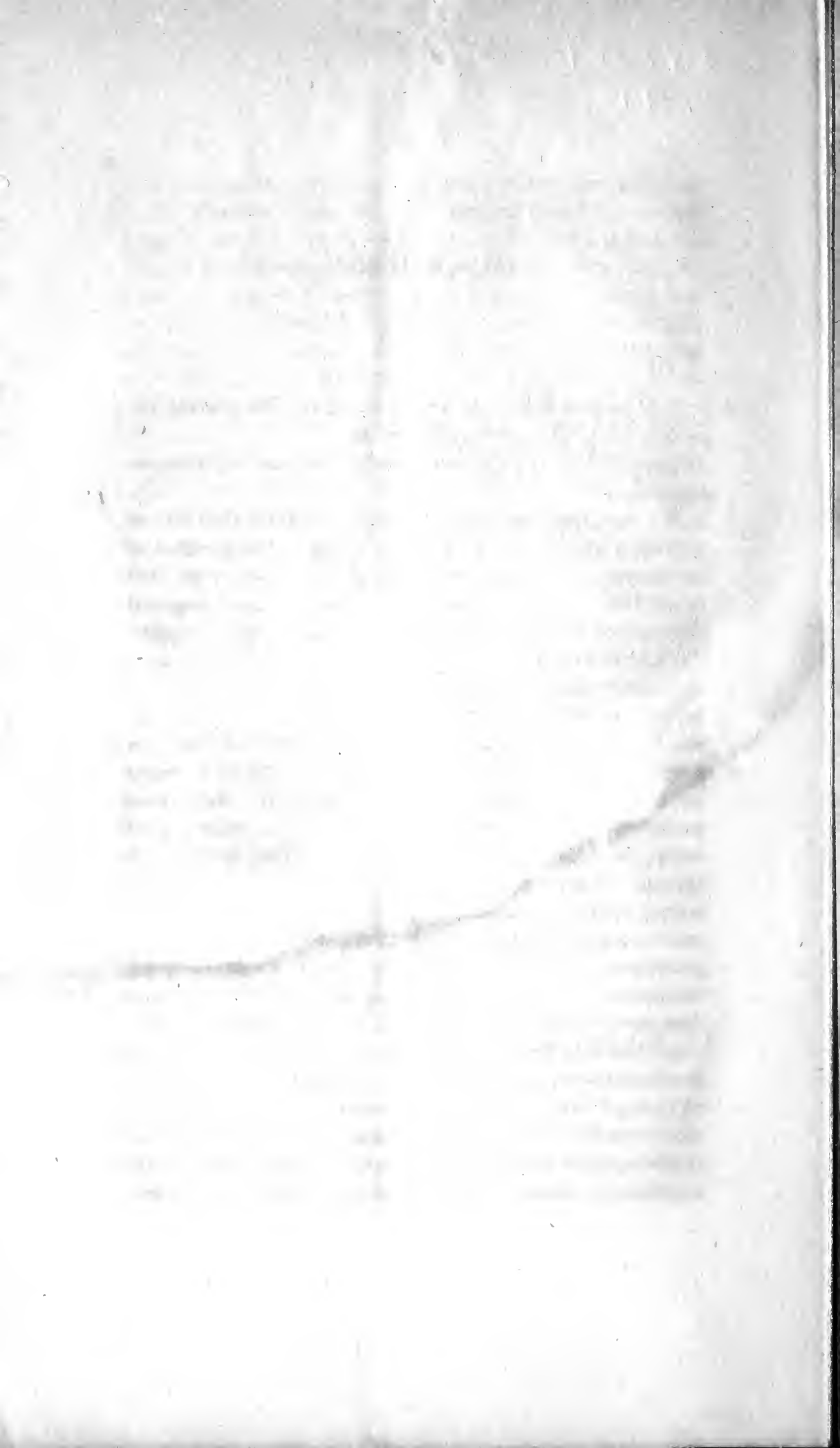
Reciprocating fully your expressions of regard,

I remain,

Sincerely yours,

O. O. M'CLEAN.

PROF. M. L. STOEVEER,



DISCOURSE.

OUR purpose at this time, is to speak of *Two leading objects of Bible Associations in our land.*

One is, *The establishment and perpetuation of national righteousness.*

We need spend no time in showing, that the God of nations requires a national righteousness to the temporal salvation of the people, as He does a personal righteousness, as the God of all flesh, to the salvation of the soul; that the temporal rewards and penalties of the one, are as certain as the eternal issues of the other.

The covenant God entered into with the Jewish nation, is virtually entered into with every other, according to light given; and the succeeding history of the results of obedience or disobedience, is the same. Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal appear from all points of observation, with greater or less distinctness, in the history of the world; and we will have failed to read aright, the stories of the most famous nations of antiquity, if we miss the lesson—"righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." For none of them, on a distant approach to righteousness, even in the negative sense of not persecuting the truth, failed of a proportionate degree of advancement. On the contrary, unrighteousness sunk them to their graves, though the descent might be through long centuries. We may choose to escape such a conclusion respecting them, by solving their destiny by a simple reference to the will of God. We may choose to believe no more, than that the four monarchies were merely set up and cast down by Almighty power, in execution of the divine purpose respecting the kingdom of Christ. And this is true, God does his own

holy pleasure in heaven and on earth. But if we would read their history profitably, we must apply to them the solemn scripture, applicable to the individual: "The wicked shall not live out half his days;" and, "the righteousness of the righteous shall deliver them." And it is well to observe, how everything else failed to deliver the nations. The light of philosophy that shone on men's minds, unaccompanied by the ray of divine truth, the grand expansion of Grecian and Roman knowledge, all that was true and beautiful in art and science, all that was substantial in the theory and practice of government, were nothing in the eyes of the Judge of the whole earth. His providence gradually loosened the curious Mosaic work, inlaid as it was, with the diamond, sapphire, and all precious stones, swept them off as rubbish, and bade history point to the decayed frame-work beneath, that rested on no foundation of national righteousness.

If we attempt then, to solve our nation's problems, let us begin with the true text, "righteousness exalteth a nation." And it becomes us to consider how much the past delusive success of nations, how much our past advance and present apparent progress, how much our decoration with the ornaments of art and science (ornaments alas! now frequently dug up from the old graves of nations), how much our assumption and retention of the name of christian people, how much the loud acclaim of the world, that flatters our national pride, may all have led us to a blind assurance of faith in the "*esto perpetua*," declared by our constitution. We confess ourselves ignorant of any "law of national progress" but one. We do not understand the law of self-development, applied to man in any condition, personal, domestic, social or civil. He has no inward vital force, by which, of necessity, he tends upward. On the contrary, his course is downwards, with acceleration proportioned to the length of his years; and nothing but the grace of God can stop him. His nature is the true stone of Sisyphus; the world toils to raise it, but it every now and then rolls back, with crushing power. Strange indeed, that the only correct personal estimate of man, that given in

the Word, and confirmed by experience, does not modify, or totally change the views some have of social development. A creature born in sin, under a curse, with the intellect darkened, the heart corrupt, the conscience (that light so many boast ignorantly of) *fallen*, just like the other powers of the soul, the very body, bearing the prison marks upon it, and executed capitally, every day, in the face of the world, why it seems a mockery, to talk of any other development natural, of such a being, than one of degradation and death. We have intimated that what was true of him individually, is true of him socially. He may organize to an extent to grasp both the oceans, a population, busy, and skilful as the bees, may spread over the intervening territory, and store their wealth; yet the aggregate is really no better, naturally, or more promising than the individual. The only real gain and advance here made, is one of mere power. The things generally boasted of by natural men in organized bodies, are phosphorescences; cold lights that shine wherever there is corruption. Or, if there be a ground of true boast, the objects will be found not to be natural, but acquired through the direct or indirect influence of the gospel.

It becomes us then, to turn away from our external splendor, which after all may not be from the orient of true future promise, but merely the reflected glory we have caught from the sun-sets of other nations, and which we, in our turn, are destined to reflect on people of still greater magnitude, and to see if the Sun of Righteousness has indeed risen upon us. We must not so readily hear the flattery of the world, that hails the Young American giant of freedom. We gird him for the race with mighty iron cinctures; we make every telegraphic nerve tense with electric life; there pours through his veins the richest tide of commerce; we seek to endow him with all human wisdom; we throw around him the starry mantle of our past glory, and behold him striding on in the greatness of his way, amid the acclaims of mankind; yet let us know, that unless he is righteous, like many a Hercules before him, he will perish under the wrath of God.

Let us then see what are the more important *elements of national righteousness*, and indicate briefly, as we pass along, *how far they seem to be found in us ; and learn from all, the responsibility of Bible Associations.*

One element of national righteousness is, *constitution and laws based on the Bible.* It is a partial view of the word of God, that makes it simply a revelation of his will to man, as he is related to eternity. It is designed as his rule of conduct, as a social being in time. He is to be separated in no condition whatever, from the government of God. The social compact system, that originates government in human device and agreement, is atheistical in its tendency, and loosens the tie of human responsibility. "The powers that be," says the Apostle, "are ordained of God." Government, then, is *His* appointment ; the original type of it being the family institution, and the great command, "obey thy father and mother," the radical law of it. This being so, it follows that the rule of government is the word of God ; and it follows also, that a necessary part of a nation's righteousness, will be conformity of constitution and laws to the Bible. That there is with us, such a general conformity, you know. It was behind this great principle, that Webster entrenched himself, in his famous argument respecting the will of Stephen Girard. And we are glad to find the sentiment common. Let us rejoice in the evidences of the fact. We may remember that our very national existence itself, did not commence in crime. We seem to have been born comparatively free, if we may so express it, from national original sin. Our very territory was settled from a religious necessity. On the shore of New England, Plymouth rock stands, the memorial of separation from the hoary iniquities of the old world. *There*, bowed, as around an altar of national consecration, the knees of our Puritan fathers. Thence they stepped forth, "kings and priests" of the most High, with a holy unction, the sweet savor of which perfumes American institutions. Nor are we to forget how the additional material gathered to our shores, to form the foundation of our republic, was conglomerate of the precious stones, the

fragments of broken Zion of many a clime. Providence appeared to exhaust the resources of other nations, to replenish this continent with strong and virtuous souls. And when they were forced to the field of battle, the war was not one of ruthless aggression, marked by the ancient sin of covetous or ambitious conquest, but was waged for conscience and justice sake. And amid the many exhibitions of goodness that sanctified the struggle, every one here will fix the eye on the sublime and pure character of George Washington. The glory of his name are his righteousness and truth. Through their inward force, his nature was, under God, bright and beautiful, like the sun in its own light, shining with an intrinsic, and not merely *borrowed* excellence, thrown upon it by surrounding favorable circumstances. And we love to think that we may illustrate, and partially at least, describe the early American spirit, by his own. That spirit certainly exhibited itself in a legislation essentially christian. Permitting themselves to be guided by the common law of England, our early law-makers were so far influenced by the Bible, that, in the main, they added to, or rejected, according to the principles of righteousness. The tone of legislation, in some of the States, was moral, even to the fault of over-much righteousness; a fault incurred by zeal, not always according to knowledge. But even in this, we see something favorable. It indicated by its unprofitable exuberance, a moral vitality in legislation, beyond what was usually the case, since the days of the Jewish theocracy. These legal excrescences have fallen off. But the spirit, that produced them, is still active. A tendency to moral legislation is every now and then exhibiting itself with power. It is one of the striking manifestations of the times. Those narrow views of political economy, advocated by some eminent men in France and England, during the past sixty years, that leave man unprotected in his moral interests, and fence him round in all other quarters, we are glad to say, do not govern our legislation. And there is just now a wonderful revival of the idea, that legislation on internal improvements, or science and education, does not exhaust the legitimate labors of

our representatives. Possessed already of enactments intended to secure the better observance, externally, of a number of the divine commands, we are seeking further to restrain the outbreaks of man's corrupt propensities. It may have been known long ago, that certain physical stimulants made man worse, and more difficult to govern; but the fact has only of late years attracted much attention. And people are beginning to see that it is right and consistent, to lay the hand of law upon them. And we are surprised, that any should think we have gotten off the proper track of legislation, by aiming at laws of prohibition against excitants to crime. For, if what we have said be true, such legislation is in entire keeping with past moral legislation. Unquestionably, when any thing becomes a cause of evil, generally confessed and felt, there is provision in a christian constitution to stop it, if a greater evil will not follow the hindrance.

But we may, leaving the broad principle, contract the argument thus, to suit any who may choose to deny the christian basis of our constitution. Governments have a constitutional right to hinder, and should, if possible, stop any cause that is seriously non-productive; governments have a constitutional right to lessen taxation, and especially when taxation is connected with a non-producing cause; governments have a constitutional right to make individual interests, especially when they are equivocal, bend to the common good. And all this being true, any statute law existing, that may come in, and create difficulties in the passage of a prohibitory law, or interfere with its fair and useful execution, shows itself—and not the prohibitory law—to be contrary to the spirit, at least, of our constitution. How much more, then, is it true, that no statute can, in any way, affect the clear sweep of law that is designed to arrest a fruitful source of crime, and not itself be contrary to the spirit of our constitution, and need modification, if, as certainly is the case, our government is essentially a christian one. It will be time enough to speak of any necessary moral enactment violating rights of conscience, and other personal rights, when we can show that it is always right to let natural

conscience guide a man as it pleases—and, therefore, that the Hindoo mother, if she were amongst us, might, unhindered, throw her child into the Potomac—when we can show, that personal right consists, literally, in a man's doing as he pleases. We admit that in the majestic march of such legislation, individuals and corporations must suffer. Suffer they may, and suffer they must, if they sin, but wronged they are not.

We hail these increased attempts at moral legislation, as indicating, in one direction, an increase in national righteousness, as expressive of clearer views of duty, and enlarged disposition to order and virtue on the part of a large portion of the American people. We look confidently for its progress, a progress still pointing to the time when "the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."

Fairness requires, that we should look a moment at the defects of our national righteousness, under this head. One is, that the constitution of the United States did not, carrying out the spirit of the Declaration of Independence, from the beginning forbid slavery; and that the constitutions of so many of our States, deliberately authorize it. Another is, that while by some laws the Sabbath is protected, by others, relating to the Post Office department, and some corporate bodies, who are *allowed* to violate the Sabbath, the former laws are rendered, in a measure, nugatory. Another is, that our legislation on divorce is, to a great extent, in direct contradiction to divine law on that subject, expressed with the utmost plainness and precision. Another is, that though the principle of moral legislation appears to be gaining ground, yet the practice of so many of our people falls below it. Profanity, Sabbath-breaking, intemperance, and lewdness, prevail to a fearful extent, though it relieves the American character of much of the odium that might otherwise be thrown upon it, to know, that a large proportion of the villainies enacted, is by foreigners. "The whole number of persons convicted of crime in the United States, for the year ending June, 1850, was about twenty-seven thousand. Of these, fourteen thousand were

foreigners. The whole number in prison on the first day of June, was about six thousand seven hundred. Of these, two thousand four hundred and sixty were foreigners."

The question, *Are a majority of our people moral*, is a most momentous one, connected with the fact of the general righteousness of our institutions and laws. For it is a sad thing, when a people's practice is better than its constitution or laws—sad only as far as it may lead to bloody revolution. But it is a sad thing in all respects, when a people's practice, in a majority of cases, falls below good constitution and law; the heavy condemnation of rejected light, rests upon them. But we hope better things of the American people. We are willing to believe that not only is our righteousness, in a general way, exhibited in our constitution and laws, but also, on the whole, in the practice of our people. But heaven alone, can judge of the latter.

Another element of national righteousness is, *official recognition of God*. This consists on the part of our rulers, supposed to speak the nation's voice, formal acknowledgment, on all proper occasions, of the being, perfection, and government of God; his providential care; of national obligation to his mercy; of national sin, accompanied with all proper efforts to make government a terror to evil doers, and a reward to the good—just at home and abroad—and also in their endeavoring to conform their own lives to the rules of morality, as the leaders of the people.

In considering this particular, the defect that strikes us most unfavorably, is the lamentable failure, on the part of most subordinate magistrates especially, to enforce existing moral enactments. We object seriously to this, not only because of its being a failure in duty on their part; but because it does not fairly represent the moral sense of the community, and because careless execution of any moral enactment, is just so much hindrance to progress in moral legislation. He, who bears the sword, ought not to bear it in vain. With this sad exception, and that of a particular department of general government, authorizing the violation of the Lord's day, by the

transmission of mails, we are happy to state our belief in the moral character of our government—the correct *official* bearing on the whole of our nation—and we find an increased tendency in our rulers to recognize the authority of God, our responsibility to him—the mediatorial reign of his son.

Another element of national righteousness, is *justice and mercy*. A nation to be righteous in the sight of God, must afford itself an instrument of the divine retributive justice on earth; there must, as intimated under the last paragraph, be justice among the people to each other, and justice shown to other nations; there must be national benevolence shown at home and abroad. We remark, first, a nation must be a punisher of sin. As far as sin in the overt act comes under the cognizance of earthly governments, they have *no option* in the case. Human government being of divine appointment, it was so for this purpose, that God might, through it, govern, punish and reward men. Government, then, like the volcano, like the earthquake, the devouring pestilence, or the final terrors beyond the grave, is one of the agents of Heaven's retributions on the wicked. And no nation, through a mawkish philanthropy, or false views of the gospel, can seek to escape this unpleasant duty, without incurring, we believe, the divine displeasure. The chief point of failure here, it will strike you, is the attempt making to set aside the principal temporal divine enactment against crime on earth; "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." And thus, the theological error, that God is all benevolence, assumes a dangerous political form. Protesting against the imputation to those, who, from a sense of duty, defend capital punishment, of hardness, and unkindness to man, we would have those who are endeavoring to set aside a divine enactment, consider, in addition to what has been above urged, a sentiment we once heard, in conversation, from one distinguished for practical wisdom;* that if capital punishment be not a divine enactment, obligatory on governments, how is it, that almost invariably, Providence throws his net around the mur-

* Rev. Dr. McConaughy.

derer, so that he cannot escape, and thus hands him over to governments God knows will execute him.

Nations are equally bound to afford themselves the instruments of the proportionate punishment of other crimes. There is no more choice left them here, than there would be between setting up the idol of Baal, in the Capitol at Washington, and adhering to the acknowledgment of the true God. But a nation must be *just* ! It must be just in the fulfilment of international obligations, just in the nature and administration of its laws at home, while justice among each other, must characterize a majority of the people. Professional and commercial intrigue, usurious practices, hard and oppressive dealing, unjust appropriation of any kind, among a majority of the people, are a violation of the implied national covenant, and bring down a curse on the land ; and the opposite of these, national blessings. It may be, undue partiality leads to the supposition—but if so, you will pardon it—that while there is much to the contrary, there is much public virtue amongst us. There is much integrity in the various departments of life. And what is an important item, oppressive monopoly (to whatever extent it does exist) is not known, as in some other countries on the earth. You are thinking, perhaps, of some great exceptions. Admitting the injustice done the Indian tribes sometimes, and the gross injustice done the colored population of the South—for all earth's sophistry cannot make it justice—we console ourselves with the thought that we see signs of national penitence. There was this penitence in the breast of the framers of the Declaration of Independence, but policy kept their sentiments out of the constitution. There is inquiry north and south, as to the best mode of deliverance from the evil, not of Jewish, but American slavery, a thing entirely *sui generis*. And we will do many, who are personally involved, and more, perhaps, than we usually imagine, the simple justice of believing that they are willing to be just to the slave, if fanaticism does not prevent them. National conviction of this evil betokens certainly anything else than a determined easy spirit under it, or a being given over to judicial blindness, and

consequent national punishment on account of it. In connexion, we remark again, that true national righteousness means national *mercy*. How remarkably the nations of the earth have been wanting in this attribute! Look at the penal code of many of them even now, that are professedly christian. The leading idea of old governments was, justice. They forgot to mingle it with mercy. She seldom smiled down on men from their civil and social institutions. It has been reserved for nations in these last times, and we think especially for our own, to become types and illustrations of the kingdom of Christ, in which "justice and mercy meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other." Such must they be, if they would permanently prosper. As a nation must yield itself an instrument of divine justice, so also must it, of divine benevolence. Laws must be made to favor the oppressed and down-trodden, to succor the needy, and deliver the poor when he erreth, and under the fostering care of government, and of the rich and influential, institutions must arise, in whose halls, and through whose corridors, Christ shall again walk, in the persons of his messengers of mercy, and heal the sick, wipe the tear from the cheek of the orphan, and cause the widow's heart to sing, while there must be, such a diffusion of the same spirit as, under a proper view of the horrors of strife, and of the relations of the universal brotherhood, will check the aspirations of national pride, and diminish the incentives to war. Proclaiming distinctly the exception of the institution alluded to, and without saying anything, whatever, of it as a political measure, of a late law connected with it, I feel happy in thinking that I am a member of a government that may be, in the true sense of the word, termed more merciful than any on earth, and that I dwell among a merciful people. I feel thankful for what I see, on the whole, of a benevolent spirit in our national and State laws, and the manner of their execution, and in multitudes of our social institutions, I hear the voice of mercy in the legislative hall, and in the court of justice; her celestial presence flashes from the domes of many an hospital, house of refuge, and instruction

for the poor, while she is admitted, in her benign mission, by the hand of justice itself, within the inner gates of the prison.

Another element of national righteousness is, *entire freedom for, and aid to, the operation of the Gospel.*

The world was made, and all the mighty machinery of Providence arranged, and all the affairs of man, civilly and socially, are conducted by the hand of Omnipotence, for the purpose of exalting the Son of God on earth. "The heathen may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed;" yet the decree has gone forth, and cannot be reversed, that "to him every knee shall bow." And as we can trace in the affairs of ancient nations, preparations for Christ's incarnation, so can we see in the providential conduct of nations now, preparations for the bringing in of his final universal spiritual dominion. The setting up of national power, pomp and glory against him, is commuted by the Lord into an aid to this design; but a curse rests on the opposing people; and national influence, directed every way to this end, is accepted, and the most beneficent blessings follow. And we can very easily conceive of all national arrangements, and that without any union of church and state, or without supposing a large majority of the people to be true christians, or without even referring the condition of things we speak of, to the millenium, being so ordered as to promote this end. That is, under the influence of the ten thousands who *are* true believers, under a clear intellectual view and persuasion of the excellence and external advantages of christianity, and of its connexion with national prosperity, it is possible for a people, in the majority, to be brought to pour the full tide of their influence, in their legislation, commerce, agriculture, and learned professions, into the channel of gospel support. And verily, this shall be their great righteousness, the highest exhibition of ordinary national virtue, an advance that shall be in extreme and glorious contrast with the martial or intellectual greatness of the nations of antiquity.

It is plain from this, that the lowest form of such national righteousness, consists in giving full scope and freedom to the operation of the gospel. It is a law of Christ's kingdom that that gospel *shall be preached to the poor—to the masses*. And wo be to that people, sooner or later, who by civil enactments, or in any way whatever, hinder *His* mission, who was sent to the poor—whose appropriate audience on earth, are publicans and sinners. The curse of this sin is now resting on some of the nations of the old world, and the blessing of an opposite course on others. Observance of the law is one of the grand elements of their strength—just as it has been the element of strength and prosperity in the denomination founded by Wesley (alas! that we see any signs of departure from its original design)—and we believe it to be one of the main elements of our own nation's prosperity. We rejoice in the fact of our exemption from civil hindrances to the gospel, saving in the case of those unfortunate slaves, who are not permitted to be taught to read. But it is something, that, as far as we know, they are not hindered by civil enactments from hearing the word. Be it noticed, that all our social institutions (the one alluded to just now, being but a partial exception) are so modified, as to give the preacher of the gospel and the Bible distributor, access to all. In addition to this, we must recollect the national respect that is paid to christianity—the protestant position of a majority of the people—and the liberal aid extended by citizens, to promote education and other things that are helps to the gospel—and to promote the gospel itself, at home and abroad. We are not to overlook our thousands of Sabbath-Schools and Missionary Associations—nor our ten thousand churches for the worship of God. We are not to forget that our American Zion, for zeal and self-sacrifice, is the praise of the whole earth. And we are to look at all this as constituting, unquestionably, a part of our national righteousness—to be followed by corresponding *temporal* blessings. How much of it is *real*, is not for us to say—nor is this a question we need now consider—that is a question relating more to the eternal award of *individuals*, than to the temporal salvation and pros-

perity of nations. That much—that a great deal of it, is real and spiritual, (and we believe it to be so) adds to the glory of our national righteousness. It is true, that there is much that opposes the progress of the gospel amongst us, in some ways. But we believe that Infidelity and Jesuitism are not sins to be laid to the charge of a majority of our people. Both are, in the main, exotics; they take root, and grow rapidly in our soil, we admit—but they are marked by the large portion of our citizens as Upas trees, and we believe a majority of our people avoid their deadly influence.

It is true, again, that many of our people appear gospel-hardened—but the spread and power of revivals amongst us, and the large accessions to American churches, appear to indicate that by us, as a people, the external advantages and privileges of christianity, and its more important spiritual blessings, have not been forfeited, at least, by *national* rejection of the gospel.

In drawing from these imperfect remarks, conclusions respecting the responsibilities of Bible Societies in our land, it has not escaped your notice that the view taken of the moral condition of our country has, on the whole, been favorable. Too much so, perhaps you will say. Yet we have spoken our convictions—and you will not deny us the privilege of entertaining them. We may satisfy your scruples, by admitting our *national danger*, to the full extent, if you will, to which you realize it. But let us rejoice in the evidences of national righteousness that are before us. And let us remember that we owe all to *the direct and indirect influence of God's word*. How important then, *that* organization appears, whose design is to carry that word through the length and breadth of the land. I flatter you not, when I tell you that you take precedence of all organizations known in our country, except the visible church.

How obvious then your duty, to redouble your zeal. A strange supineness has crept over many Bible Associations. They, of all bodies on earth, should not sleep. They have more conservative power entrusted to them, than any other.

Let your motto then be, *prayerful earnestness*. There must be that spirit in your going forth to conquer kingdoms for Christ, that there is in the single soul going to take the spiritual kingdom. You must *agonize* to enter. Bring then to bear, all the moral forces you wield—superior to those of the Tract, Sabbath-School, or any other association, in so far as the Bible is superior to Tracts and Sabbath-School books—upon every institution in our land, and especially the domestic. Let me urge you to this by every unfavorable circumstance we have dwelt on. The greatest difficulties besetting our nation, are those involving moral questions of a high order. And these, it is beyond the power of mere political and legislative wisdom, satisfactorily to adjudicate and settle. To meet fairly such a question as that of slavery, for instance, or that of Jesuitism, or Infidelity, or any question lying beyond the range of “internal improvement,” there must be *rectified views of individuals*. The source of this rectification is not education, common sense, or natural conscience alone—but direct light from the word of God. It has always seemed to many, as if the attempt to force national or state legislation on any moral question, making that the *first* thing to be done, was exceedingly unwise.

Some, however, who cannot wait for God to reform the world in his own way, say, that what we require has been done, and point to the insufficiency of the result. Denying such insufficiency, we point with all confidence to *what has been done* by the moral power of God’s word, acting on the individual, to modify wrong, and give hope of its eradication. The result is satisfactory.

But finally, it is an encouragement, and an argument for bringing to bear the power of the Bible on the settlement of intricate moral questions, involved by the contact of years, with our very being, that the Bible proposes to settle them without sundering national ties, or disturbing our brotherhood. Appealing first to any other adjudication—and passionately grasping at some other mode of settlement, we need not be surprised at the reaction of bloody revolution.

The other leading object of Bible associations in our land, is *the salvation of souls*.

Those who are engaged in this cause with right views, aim at the glory of God, the end of all things. But next to this, and as the chief mean of promoting it, is the rescue of men from the ruins of the fall, and their restoration to the divine image. Compared with this high end, many other legitimate ones are insignificant. But there is danger of our somewhat neglecting it.

In the church, and religious associations connected with it, worldly external influence, according to divine constitution, is joined with the spiritual. But if due care be not taken, the world's idea of the church and its appliances, being very good things for necessary ordinary uses, will be allowed too freely to leaven the visible body of Christ, and its moral institutions. Their mere temporal advantages will be suffered too much to occupy the foreground of the view. This has appeared to an extent the case with regard to Sabbath associations and conventions. How far this may be so with Bible societies, or whether it can be affirmed of them at all, we do not undertake to say. But that there is danger in this utilitarian age, of the Bible itself being ranked too much among the resources of revenue and power, we suppose all will admit. For this reason, it is certainly a very common thing to find the great and the wise bowing to Solomon, and the rich among the people entreating his favor. There is undoubtedly a national exaltation of the word of God, that is not easily separable from that of commerce and agriculture, science, and the fine arts; and Christ may have a solemn inauguration, not essentially different from that of a patron saint. One of the favorite schemes of the great adversary, in our age, appears to be, to hide the Son of God, in his own external glory—to blind men to the true light, by the blaze of the outward—to weaken the hands of the church by spoiling her motives, and misdirecting her zeal.

Thankful that associations for doing good, are supported by the intelligence, virtue, and wealth of the enlightened, let us

beware that the scale of duty be not graduated by earth's best measure—that we do not, in seeking, through the instrumentalities we wield, to make men worthy citizens in certain respects, forget that our grand object is to deliver them from sin and perdition, and raise them to holiness and heaven.

It is chiefly through the foolishness of preaching, God saves them that believe. Yet we probably underrate the importance of the word *read*, as a mean of salvation. This is owing, in part, to its influence being more secret, and having less to do with the interference of human agency. But there is another reason. The more public channels of conveying truth, in our age, seem to attract more attention, than the *domestic* channel, one of God's great appointments for learning the knowledge of Christ, and in which the word *read*, under earnest, prayerful, parental sanction, is the chief mean. The word bears testimony concerning itself, that it is "able to make men wise to salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." How rich and abundant are the illustrations of this truth, in the history of the church! The forces that sustain and constitute the vitality of nature, sometimes appear, working out their designs, with a wonderful "observation." But when we neither see nor hear them, they are—hidden and secret, operating around us, and we only realize their presence in their ordinary effects. So with the spiritual agencies of God's kingdom. They sometimes break forth in the glorious observation of revivals of religion—but they are operating also with a silent power among the families of the earth, especially where the word is read—and thus, Jesus "comes down like rain on the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." And we should not fail to notice how God's covenant with Abraham respecting the visible body of Christ, has a domestic bearing; and how, ordinarily, the blessings of Zion have descended through father and son. Blessed usually have been those families, where the word of God was made the meditation of parents and children, day and night. There is, perhaps, no portion of the earth, where the religion of Jesus has been more kept up in family succession, or where there prevails more

generally among the people, a pure and substantial piety, than in Scotland. And there is no country, taken as a whole, perhaps, where the Bible is more read and studied in a practical way. Similar illustrations of the secret and family influence of the word read, are numerous recorded, and known to most of you, in the history of Bible and Tract colportage.

Bible associations, then, keeping the high aim of the salvation of souls before them, are to go forth to the work, in the way in which, under the blessing of God, they will be most likely to accomplish it. That way we would respectfully suggest, will be, to attempt to place a copy of the scriptures in every house in the land, where one is needed—to render it accessible to all—and by every proper personal effort, to encourage men to read it, and pray over it, for the enlightening spirit. Be encouraged to this work, in view of what we have just said of the *word read* as a divine appointment, through the spirit's power, to man's salvation. You are to go forth, under the direct apprehension, that you are working with a mean that God has tied to an end—a tie to be confirmed or loosened, according to his good pleasure—like all other ties in the kingdom of nature. For either “means of grace” is a phrase of pure theological invention and fancy—and if so, is an imposition on the christian world; or, is language that accords with the teachings of God's word, and should influence our conduct more than it seems to do. It cannot be correct to say, that “means of grace” are only applicable where grace already exists, for we are commanded to “*strive to enter in* at the straight gate.” Repentance and faith are certainly immediate duties of every sinner; but we would not leave him in the death of his unwillingness, and therefore impotency, to comply with gospel commands, without informing him of means adapted to his exigencies. Such a doctrine can only injure, when loosely stated, and when the sinner perversely rests in the means, instead of striving through them to get to Christ. It becomes us then, more to exalt the agency we wield—the *word read*, next to the word preached, the power of God to salvation. As David and those who carried the ark from banishment, we are

bearing something, the like of which is not to be found in the earth. We are moving with that divine word, by which the mountains and hills are to be levelled, and the valleys exalted, and a way to be made for the Lord of hosts. It becomes us, then, as did the company of David, to move forward with songs of thanksgiving, and more assurance of success.

Be stimulated, again, to further and more diligent exertion, by the vast amount itself of unsuccessful Bible effort already made, leading to the supposition that that effort was lame in some or many important particulars. Indeed the very fact that you may be the savor of death unto death, as well as of life unto life—that you may fearfully aggravate the moral ruin around you, should lead you to sow with more care, and prayer to God for His spirit, the seed of the word. While in the gloomiest hours of your want of success, you are to remember what every minister of the gospel especially should, that the success of many toilers in the vineyard, appears often to be merely in their *succeeding to be faithful and laborious*. The fruit is often, in a way utterly unaccountable to us, denied. There appears, often, an analogy between the operation of natural and spiritual agencies, in their coming down designedly powerless. The natural and spiritual husbandman must often cast some seeds on the rock. Yet both must sow on—sow on—*that* is the appointed labor of our life.

Again, we should be encouraged to go on with renewed zeal, in view of some things that appear externally favorable to the work. The entire freedom of access the word has, mentioned under the former head, is one. We do not just allude to the fact of our being permitted to distribute the word without the civil hindrances existing in some lands, but to our entire freedom of access, for the most part, to families and persons. Our mode of society, affected as it is by the prevailing republican spirit amongst us, has few barriers to free personal communication. There is also something in the domestic relation in this country, that seems favorable to the successful, or unhindered pursuit of your work. It has a comparative elevation, not to be found, perhaps, anywhere

else—and probably presents amongst us authority and influence, that may be turned to great advantage in impressing the lessons of God's word. Let us not forget, too, the denominational effort to enforce the truth. Christians of various bodies are busy in issuing publications, partaking, it is true, of denominational distinctions—but generally agreeing in setting forth Christ and him crucified, as the ground of a sinner's hope; and faith and repentance as the way through which the blessings of salvation can be enjoyed. And in this, we may be permitted to observe, appears the divine unity of protestantism—a better unity than others boast of, and one that sect no more really destroys, than the seams in the walls, or the different rooms of a house, destroy its unity. The informing spirit of protestantism—Bible truth—is its bond of unity through the spirit. Again, we remark, we are not to overlook the intercessory influence of the church amongst us. Our American Zion has power with God. All who work in this labor of love are prayed for, and sympathized with, by ten thousand souls whom they have never seen—and the Bible distributor, with the minister of the gospel, has a constant remembrance in the closets and at the family altars of our christian people. These things, and some others we cannot now mention, that are themselves directly or indirectly owing to Bible influence, cheer you onward—while there sounds above them all, the still small voice of the promise, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” In addition to what we have said, it may be worth while to notice, that most of our people can peruse the word of God, and to observe the vehicle in which, for the most part, saving truth is carried over the land—the English tongue—a medium so well adapted to the clear and concise statement of the form of sound words—a language so universally spoken, and which it is extremely probable, will be used as the most influential channel of spreading the knowledge of the Lord in the latter days.

Permit us to close, by further cheering you in your labors, with a sentiment that has been entertained by many great and

good men, viz: *That our country was designed by God, as the chief theatre of Bible influence on the earth.* Says Edwards, "God has made, as it were, two worlds here below, the old and the new, according to the names, by which they are now called, two great habitable continents, separated, one from the other; the latter is but newly discovered—it was formerly wholly unknown, from age to age, and is, as it were, but newly created. It has been of late, wholly in the possession of Satan, the church of God having never been in it, as it has been in the other continent from the beginning of the world. This new world is now probably discovered, that the new, and most glorious state of the church on earth might commence there, and that God might in it begin a new world in a spiritual respect, when he creates the new heavens and new earth." And a little further on he adds, "it is worthy to be noted that America was discovered about the time of the Reformation, or a little before," and he intimates his belief that God intended to prosper, in one land particularly, his holy religion, that he had revived in Germany, under Luther. We believe in this prospect, on rational and scriptural grounds—whatever difference in the interpretation of prophecy may exist—and we rejoice in it. We bid you look forward with hope, even in the midst of much existing immorality, and the efforts of powerful foes, to the time when our country will have risen to the true character and station of a christian republic—when clear and saving views of truth shall abound like day—and the general practice of all "things lovely, and of good report," make her beautiful and conspicuous among the people of the earth, that shall walk with Christ in his Millennial glory. Blessed are your hands that labor for such a consummation! Blessed are the eyes that shall behold it, and the ears that shall hear the harmonies of a redeemed nation!

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